Tips for Families: Managing Screen and Study Time

What Is Screen Time?

Simply put, *screen time* is time spent in front of an electronic screen on a TV, tablet, computer or smartphone. We all have at least one of these devices, and for good reason. We need them to communicate, gather information, do our jobs, study, keep track of our busy lives and to relax.

When Is Screen Time Good — or Bad — for Children?

Plenty of experts say some screen time can be good. For example, when the content is high quality, viewers build better language skills. Children get this benefit when they watch educational programming with someone who talks with them about what they're learning.

There is a warning, though: Too much time on screens every day — even with high-quality content — is linked to lower language development and other problems. Research has shown possible connections between too much screen time and problems such as obesity and poor performance in school.

sleep problems **lower grades in school**
reading fewer books poor self-image
mood problems **weight problems**
fear of missing out **poor cognitive development**
lower language development
less time with family and friends

How Much Is Too Much?

With many students using screens to learn from home, families want to know how much screen time is too much. Experts and professional groups generally agree on the recommendations in this table. The table also shows average amounts of time American students spend looking at screens every day.

Age Group	Recommended non-educational screen time per day*	Average time American children spend with screens per day
Birth to 18/24 months	Video chatting with an adult only	3 hours a day
2 years to 5 years	1 hour or less (3 hours on weekends)	2.5 hours a day
6 years and older	Negotiate limits to encourage healthy habits	Ages 8 to 12: 4-6 hours Teens: 7 to 9 hours

From groups that include the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychological Association, National Association for the Education of Young Children and the World Health Organization

Ways to Help Students Manage Study Time

You want your children to do well in school, and you also want them to know how to balance their time, so they can relax and have fun. Managing time and prioritizing tasks are skills that you can help to build. Work with your child to set a schedule that includes time for study and time for socializing, sports and other interests outside school. Successful high school students recommend these strategies:

YOU FOR YOUTH

Tips for Families: Managing Screen and Study Time

- **Have a study plan.** Set aside times when outside activities (e.g., soccer practice) are scheduled, and assign other times for homework and school assignments. Help your child follow this schedule by giving reminders or setting an alarm to switch activities.
- **Build in brain and movement breaks.** Anyone can get "stale" by sitting still too long.
- **Set mini-deadlines for big assignments.** A series of small accomplishments keeps the energy level up.
- **Stay organized.** Write a to-do list and cross things off when they're finished.
- **Prioritize.** Start each week by planning for what's coming — maybe a math test or a writing assignment will need extra time or focus.

Ways to Support Responsible Screen Use
- **Limit non-educational viewing.** Be a good example. Don't have the TV on all day, and don't have a TV in every room. Especially with young children, be selective about viewing and be present to help them understand what they're watching.
- **Turn all devices off sometimes.** Shut them off during family meals and outings, and turn off children's screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime and remove them from bedrooms.
- **Teach your child about online privacy and safety.** Make sure non-educational programming is age appropriate. Be aware of how advertising might influence your child.
- **Encourage other activity choices.** Help your children connect with friends through sports, art, music and other hobbies.

Find Out More
Check out these sources to learn more.
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2020). *Screen Time and Children.* Available at https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx
- Mayo Clinic Health System. (2021). *Children and Screen Time: How Much Is Too Much?* Available at https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/children-and-screen-time
- American Psychological Association. (2020). *What Do We Really Know About Kids and Screens?* Available at https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/cover-kids-screens
- Khan Academy. *Tips for Managing Your Study Time.* Available at https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-planning/new-sat-how-to-prep/a/tips-for-managing-your-study-time
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Technology. (2020). *Parent and Family Digital Learning Guide.* Available at https://tech.ed.gov/publications/digital-learning-guide/parent-family/